![Community Sector Council Newfoundland and Labrador — Accelerating Change]

Volunteerism in the Community Sector

June 7, 2022

VOLUNTEERS ARE THE HEARTBEAT OF COMMUNITIES

During volunteer week, volunteers from across the province were celebrated for their tremendous contributions. CSC NL thought this was a good time to *take the pulse* of volunteerism in our province. To find out about the trends organizations might be experiencing we circulated a short survey on May 4, 2022 to capture top of mind feedback. This is some of what we heard.
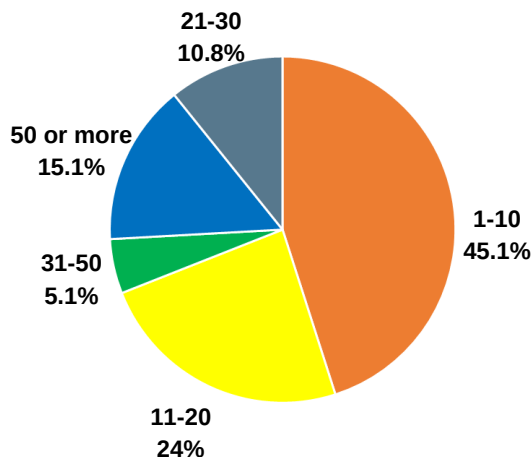

Who we Heard From

334 respondents associated with community sector organizations from all regions of the province.
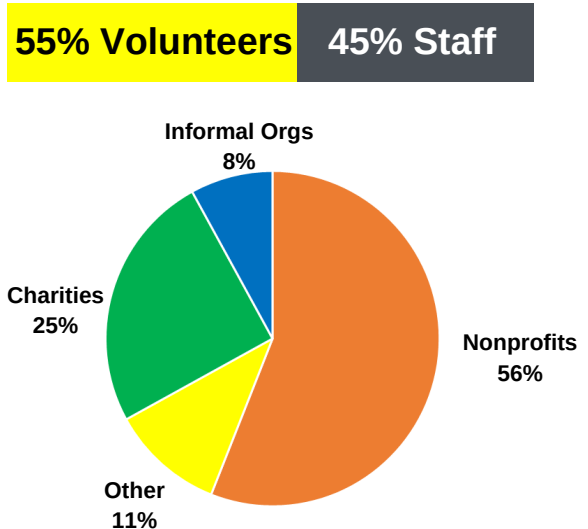
97% of respondents indicated that they are associated with organizations that have volunteers.

- 66% of respondents in this survey were associated with organizations that have 20 or fewer volunteers.
- 15% of respondents were associated with organizations that have more than 50 volunteers.
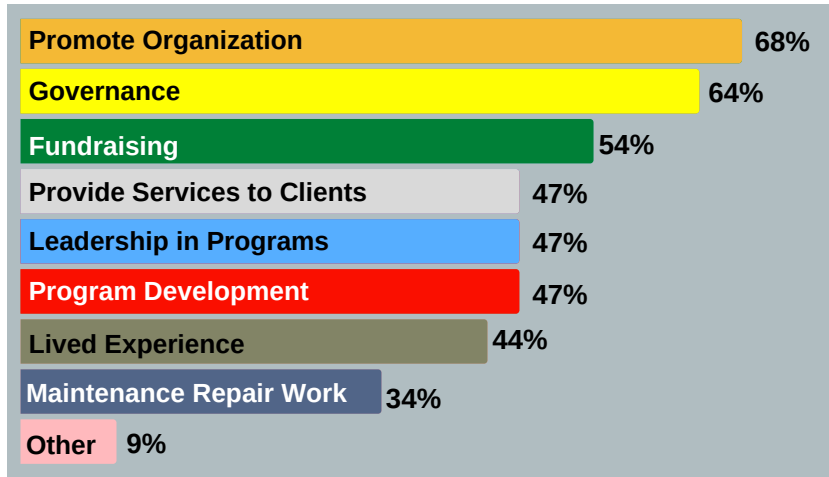
Number of Volunteers in Organizations

- 21-30: 10.8%
- 50 or more: 15.1%
- 31-50: 5.1%
- 1-10: 45.1%
- 11-20: 24%

Respondents

55% Volunteers   45% Staff

- Informal Orgs: 8%
- Charities: 25%
- Nonprofits: 56%
- Other: 11%

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Benefits to Organizations

The benefits organizations accrue from working with volunteers are significant, the graph below outlines common benefits identified in this survey.

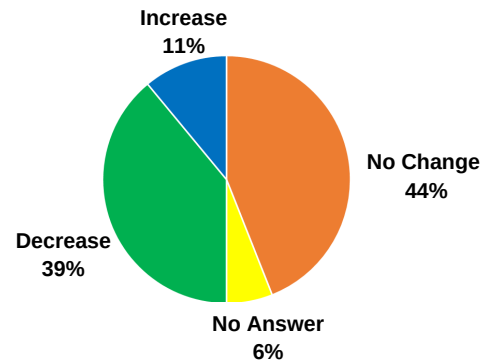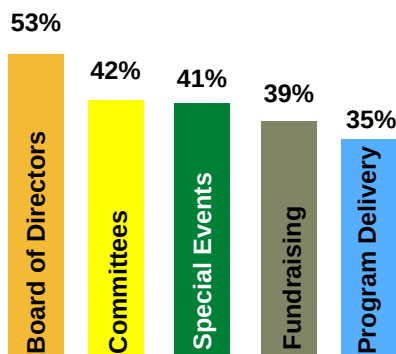| Benefit	Percentage
Promote Organization	68%
Governance	64%
Fundraising	54%
Provide Services to Clients	47%
Leadership in Programs	47%
Program Development	47%
Lived Experience	44%
Maintenance Repair Work	34%
Other	9%

Volunteerism by the Numbers

Roles Volunteers Have

- The majority of volunteers (75%) in this survey held governance positions.

- Other significant areas in which volunteers contributed include: committees (50%), special events (51%), and direct program delivery (43%).

Changes in Volunteer Numbers 2021 - 2022

- Increase 11%
- No Change 44%
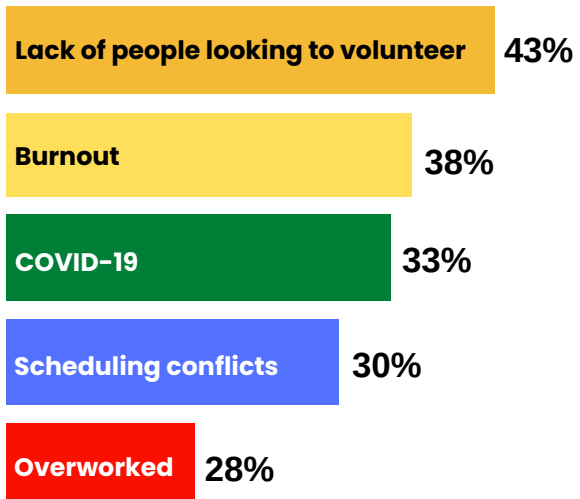- No Answer 6%
- Decrease 39%

Attraction and Retention

Volunteer Positions Organizations Need Most:

- Board of Directors: 53%
- Committees: 42%
- Special Events: 41%
- Fundraising: 39%
- Program Delivery: 35%

More than half of all respondents (60%) indicated that their organizations are having difficulty attracting or retaining volunteers in the current climate.

Organizations are actively seeking to recruit volunteers for a variety of roles within organizations including for the Board of Directors (53%), for committees (42%), and for special events or programs (41%).

Challenges

Respondents identified challenges related to the attraction and retention of volunteers.

Lack of people looking to volunteer 43%

Burnout 38%

COVID-19 33%

Scheduling conflicts 30%

Overworked 28%

Other Challenges we Heard About

- People feel overworked and under appreciated for the work they do. This has resulted in fewer people actively looking to volunteer.

- An aging population - volunteers are getting older and not being replaced by young people.

Take Aways

Volunteers are hugely important to the overall success and viability of our communities and the community sector. Volunteers contribute countless hours of unpaid labour, and carry out essential duties and tasks each and every day that enable community organizations to function. In this survey we found that the biggest role volunteers play in the community sector, is in relation to board governance or, more specifically, serving on boards. If it were not for the dedication and hard work of so many individuals the community sector could not survive.

However, right now the sector is struggling to keep up with the demands placed upon it. Volunteers are overworked and experiencing burnout at an alarming rate. This is a trend that is disturbing and unsustainable in the long run.

Board governance emerged as a significant issue among respondents, with many organizations struggling to find and keep qualified individuals to serve on boards. People who sit on boards often feel under appreciated for the work they do, and this is causing people to be reluctant to take on such positions. Overall, we found that many organizations are having difficulty maintaining their volunteer numbers in general, and that finding new people to replace existing volunteers is a real challenge. A shrinking pool of people willing or able to volunteer, ongoing issues related to the COVID-19 pandemic, and increasing demands and expectations on volunteers, is creating a real problem. Priority needs to be placed on volunteer recruitment and acknowledgment.

Providing resources for organizations to find new volunteers, and putting systems in place to acknowledge existing volunteers in meaningful ways is important to fostering and increasing volunteerism in this province.